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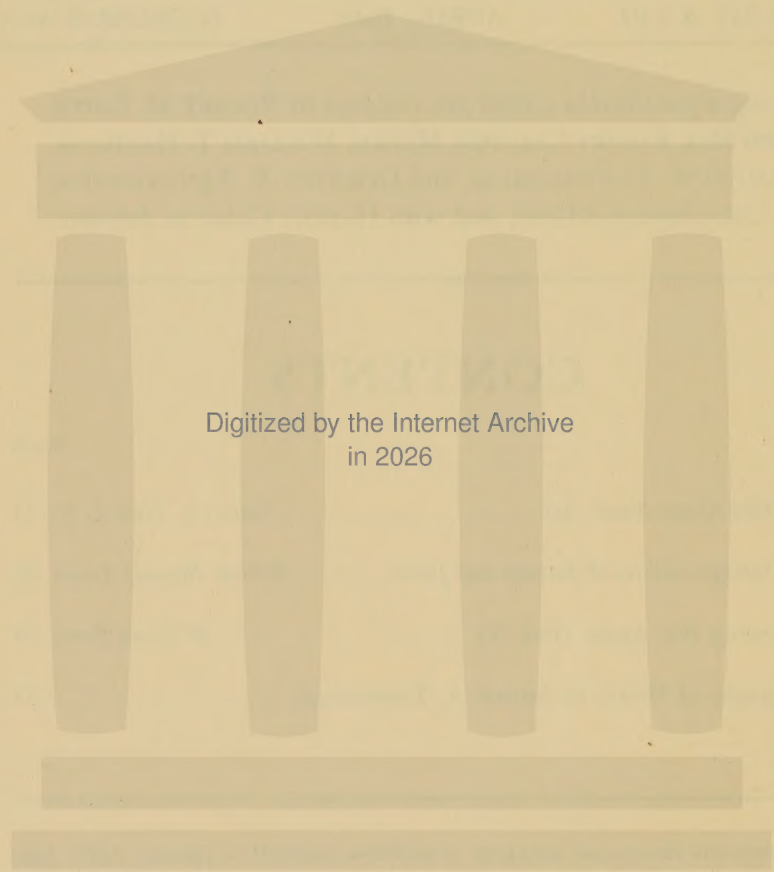

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ILLUSTRATION OF *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING* FROM NICHOLAS ROWE'S EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS (1709)

MORE ADO ABOUT *MUCH ADO*

By Sidney L. Gulick, Jr.

NO ONE need furnish reasons for liking one play or for not wishing to stage another. But to publish reasons is to risk an answer. Mr. E. J. West, in "Much Ado About an Unpleasant Play,"[1] finds that Shakespeare wrote a comedy of which he was later ashamed, one that Mr. West has been unable to bring himself to produce. What are his reasons?

To show that Shakespeare may have repented having written *Much Ado About Nothing,* Mr. West quotes nine lines from four sonnets, applying "the second burthen," "some worthless songs," "a motley to the view," and "public manners" to this hypothetical regret.[2] In the Variorum edition of the *Sonnets,* Mr. Hyder Rollins shows abundantly the dangers of interpreting selected passages from the key which may have unlocked Shakespeare's heart. These dangers Mr. West seems not to have avoided; lines applied out of context and with a free hand may provide a happy illustration but never proof of a point otherwise doubtful. There are, as Mr. Rollins suggests, so many possible interpretations to choose among! But we are concerned less with Shakespeare's supposed dislike of this play than with Mr. West's reasons for rejecting it himself.

The gist of his arraignment of *Much Ado* he states in two words: "brutality" and "bawdiness." Admitting that he lays himself open to the charge of prudery, he finds that the main plot, a melodrama involving Hero and Claudio and reaching its climax in the cathedral scene (which cannot be cut off without dismembering the play), hinges on "brutality" and "indelicacy;"[3] it "reeks to heaven of unsavoriness."[4] And growing out of this plot, "typical, essential, characteristics" of it, is the "pure bawdiness of conversation of all characters."[5] Although the worst obscenities may be excised for pub-

lic presentation, the whole tone is smutty. In consequence, he cannot bring himself to stage the play.

Rather than prudery, Mr. West appears guilty of inconsistency in both of his indictments. As to physical brutality, even in the so-called great comedies—with which he objects to having *Much Ado* classed[6]—one finds plenty of it, as in the wrestling scene in *As You Like It* [I, ii]. Here Charles, having left three brothers with their ribs broken and life despaired of, comes on the stage, prepared to follow Oliver's instructions to do his worst against Orlando; but instead Orlando throws Charles and leaves him speechless, presumably with *his* ribs splintered. In *Twelfth Night* [II, v, 51], Sir Toby exclaims, "O, for a stonebow, to hit him in the eye!"—brutal enough in concept, but lacking the finesse of Malvolio's subsequent confinement as a madman. The bickering of Helena and Hermia, in *Midsummer Night's Dream,* lacks something of decorum; taken out of comedy context, Lysander's wooing of Helena, when she thinks he mocks her, seems cruel enough to her [III, ii]. That all these plays have a happy ending merely accentuates the dream-world of comedy, in which Hero's and Claudio's love likewise comes to its dream-world conclusion of happiness.

If not brutality in the plot, although he makes somewhat of that, perhaps Mr. West objects to the subject of the plot—slander, that is, for at the end all recognize that no taint has touched Hero. Unlovely as the subject is, how much less a character is stained in a plot based on slander than in one, say, based on the reform of a prostitute, as in Dekker's *Honest Whore* or in Eugene O'Neill's *"Anna Christie,"* or, to cite Shakespeare, on seduction, as in *All's Well,* or on the reform of a scold, with its violence of temper, as in *The Taming of a Shrew,* or on attempted adulterous seduction, as in *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* or on greed and hate, as in *The Merchant of Venice,* or on jealousy and fraternal cruelty, as in *As You Like It!* Of necessity, tragedy deals in unpleasant matter; where comedy involves a clash in aims—that is, by definition wherever there is plot—some vice or unsavory characteristic almost necessarily enters. The treatment makes or mars the subject—as delightfully illustrated, in modern times, in *Arsenic and Old Lace,* where murder loses its horror and becomes farce. Shakespeare's plays are no exception; we recognize the comedy dream-world, accept its conventions, and enjoy what he intended us to enjoy.

Mr. West seems still further inconsistent in rejecting *Much Ado* on grounds of "pure bawdiness." There is an essential difference between such a play as the Fontanne-Lunt production of *Amphitron* or the typical Restoration comedy and even the unexpurgated text of *Much Ado.* To compare the latter with other plays by Shakespeare makes one wonder why Mr. West should have singled it out for his censure: Mercutio and Romeo, for instance, exchange *double-entendres* vying in wit and and indelicacy [II, iv]. To commend and prefer *Love's Labor's Lost,*[7] he must ignore such passages as that in which Boyet makes the typical Elizabethan play on horns and cuckoldry, then proceeds to a pun which makes Maria answer, "you talk greasily," i.e., indecently [IV, i, 139]. In kind, no speech in *Much Ado* is worse, nor is Margaret involved in any such scrape as Jaquenetta, whose seduction and pregnancy Costard announces in the final scene [V, ii, 678ff.]. As to drawing-room propriety, Lady Macbeth, in renouncing and denying her womanhood, speaks words of high dramatic pitch but unfamiliar in polite society [I, v and vii]. Hamlet speaks broadly in talk both to Ophelia and to his mother. And Ophelia's bawdy song does not degrade her, but rather adds pathos to the mad scene. All these are woven into the texture of the plays; no one need be offended by them, for the characters transcend such passages. The question thus really becomes: Do the characters in *Much Ado* rise above the language which Mr. West objects to? My answer is, Yes.

He has missed, as I see it, the essential qualities of both Beatrice and Benedick. Whether or not one cut a few of such lines as seem unfit for immature audiences of whatever age, surely there shines out in both characters a generosity admirable wherever found. Compare them, for example, with the suave but selfish Millamant and Mirabell in Congreve's *Way of the World,* whose drawing-room love affair deceives no audience. The motivation which is the mainspring of tragedy has little place in comedy, where character comes ready-made at the first rising of the curtain. In *Much Ado* one finds as much of the character revelation as in any of the great comedies—and it occurs with Beatrice, who is the soul of loyalty, and with Benedick, who is the mirror of honor. Claudio, valiant but changeable, has first doubted the prince, as wooing for himself [II, i, 183ff.], and then easily accepts Don John's calumny of Hero [III, ii]. But listen to Beatrice: "On my soul, my cousin is belied!" [IV, i, 148]

—this, when even Hero's father has deserted her. And Benedick comes to her support: "Surely, I do believe your fair cousin is wronged." [IV, i, 261]. In this scene, when the business becomes serious, both put aside their byplay; they know where the prosperity of a jest lies. And both are snared into declaring love for each other, by the prince and his accomplices, through their very nobility—each thinking to preserve the other from death. In this, Beatrice and Benedick stand out as having greater moral worth, for they act through more admirable motives, than Berowne or Viola or Rosalind. No, the words of badinage do not taint their characters.

To sum up: Feeling that Shakespeare repented of having written *Much Ado,* Mr. West cannot bring himself to stage it, on the ground that both in plot and in speech there is a repulsive, a brutal bawdiness. On the contrary, it seems to me that the main plot reveals a character singularly pure, since no action involves unchastity or degradation of the heroine; that the characters in the subplot are motivated by the highest ideals, so high that they are led into their great predicament by their essential goodness, and that their speech shows the freedom of wit, not of moral decay.

San Diego State College

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[1]*SAB,* XXII (1947), 30-34.

[2]*Ibid.,* p. 30 (Sonnets LXIX, C, CX, CXI).

[3]*Ibid.,* p. 31. (Quoting, he notes, Robert Bridges, *Collected Essays, Papers, Etc.* (London, 1927), p. 2.)

[4]*Ibid.,* p. 34.

[5]*Ibid.,* p. 32.

[6]*Ibid.,* p. 30.

[7]*Ibid.,* p. 32.

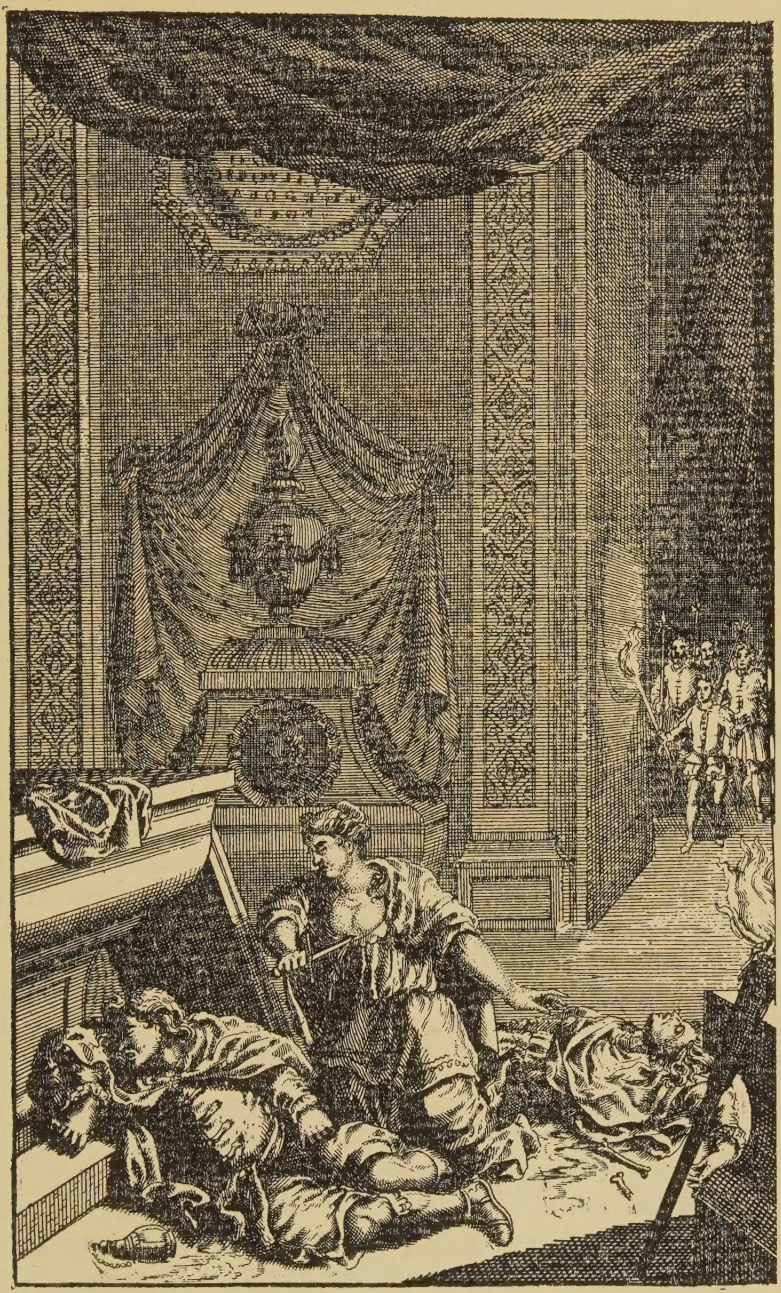

ILLUSTRATION OF *ROMEO AND JULIET* FROM NICHOLAS ROWE'S EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS (1709)

THREE INTERPRETATIONS OF *ROMEO AND JULIET*

By Robert Metcalf Smith

OF ALL the plays of Shakespeare, it would seem that *Romeo and Juliet,* the perfect love poem of the English race and of the world, should be least open to controversy and to differences of interpretation. We can readily understand why critics are still striving to pluck the heart out of Hamlet's mystery, and why every one, in spite of the critics, has his own interpretation of Hamlet. Since all the world loves a lover, all the world it would seem should understand at once the romantic devotion of Romeo and Juliet and the misfortunes of their hapless love. What more by way of interpretation is needed, and why should we mangle a beautiful story with controversies and learned discussions?

If we wish, however, to discover how this play is related to Shakespeare's conceptions of tragedy, and what kind of tragedy Shakespeare intended *Romeo and Juliet* to be, we begin to discover among critics of the play very wide differences of opinion. Three conflicting interpretations of *Romeo and Juliet* prevail among Shakespearean critics: that Shakespeare intended to write (1) a tragedy of Social Justice, (2) a tragedy of Character or Poetic Justice, (3) a Tragedy of Fate, or better, in Elizabethan parlance, of *Fortune.*[1]

I

Tragedy of Social Justice

The interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet* as a tragedy of social justice may be found most fully elaborated by Stopford Brooke,[2] who lays great stress upon the quarrel between the houses of Capulet and Montague. Some readers may instantly retort that Brooke has confused the framework of the play with the play itself; but Brooke's

argument is worthy of further examination. According to his interpretation the play is not a tragedy of the lovers, Romeo and Juliet, but a social tragedy portraying the fatal consequences of hate between the Capulets and Montagues. The lovers are only a part of the play; they are the sacrificial penalties the two Houses pay for their sins of hate. Shakespeare's main purpose, therefore, was to show the frightful toll hatred takes upon families that cherish it, and the disturbance to good government and the general peace that blood feuds cause. As the Prologue tells us at once, we are to witness:

> "Two *households,* both alike in dignity
> In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
> From *ancient grudge* break to new mutiny
> Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean."

We are also to learn that only the

> "misadventur'd piteous overthrows [of the lovers]
> Do with their death bury their parents' strife."

The disturbance to the state caused by this strife is sternly denounced by the Prince in the very opening scene:

> "Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,
> Profaners of this neighbour-stained steel,
> Will they not hear? What, ho! you men, you beasts,
> That quench the fire of your pernicious rage
> With purple fountains issuing from your veins."
> (I, 1, 88 ff.)

and the Prince threatens a penalty of death upon the participants in any future brawl; for the quarrel of the Capulets and Montagues was of long standing and had outraged the public peace three times; moreover, it had become so deeply engrained in every member of each family that even the servants went about aping the braggadocio and truculence of young blades like Tybalt and Mercutio until the greatest tragedy of youthful love suddenly arises out of an insulting gesture made by a Capulet servant to a Montague servant in the public square.

The hope of stopping this disgraceful feud led Friar Laurence

to encourage and finally to marry the lovers. To their pleas he says:

> "In one respect I'll thy assistant be;
> For this alliance may so happy prove
> To turn your households' rancour to pure love."
> (II, 3, 90-3)

Some critics have even gone so far as to inveigh against the good Friar as a meddlesome old priest full of tedious moral platitudes and perilous strategems. As a representative of Holy Church, however, he cherished two moral purposes: (1) to see to it that Romeo and Juliet were married before they were left alone together, (2) to bring peace to the city by effecting a reconciliation of Capulets and Montagues after the marriage. His purposes, therefore, were not only beyond reproach; they were obligatory to his office—whatever may be said of his methods. They meet, it is true, to quote Stopford Brooke, "the fate that the interference of churchmen in affairs most often meets." But no sooner has Friar Laurence secretly married the lovers than the sacrifices to this blood feud come thick and fast, "as if," says Stopford Brooke, "Justice herself were in a hurry to accomplish her ends, as if she were driving with hastening lash all the characters on to the catastrophe."

First dies Mercutio, calling down "a plague o' both your houses." Romeo, lashed into fury, then slays Tybalt. Owing to this, Romeo is banished and Juliet is left alone. Owing to this, Capulet forces Count Paris on Juliet. Owing to this, Juliet takes the sleeping potion, is thought by Romeo to have died, and Romeo resolves on death.

Everything then, according to this view, comes out of the hatred of the Capulets and Montagues; and the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, says Brooke, are the work of "a Power whose aim is to punish the feud by the sacrifice of the lovers. They bear the sins of others and carry them away." This retribution the Prince drives home as the bereaved fathers mourn over the bodies of their children:

> "See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
> That Heaven finds means to kill your joys and love!
> And I, for winking at your discords too,
> Have lost a brace of kinsmen: *all are punish'd.*"
> (V, 3, 292-5)

Upon this pronouncement follows the reconciliation of the houses. Montague promises to raise Juliet's statue in pure gold; and Capulet promises as rich a one for Romeo. As to the justice of such a sacrifice, Brooke remarks paradoxically: "Shakespeare accepted this apparent injustice as the work of Justice."—rather cold comfort for the lovers, but he adds, "Justice had already mercifully granted the lovers their perfect hour. Death is not much, when life has once reached the top of joy." According to this interpretation, then, Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet* as a tragedy of social justice in which the innocent are slain by the hatred of the Houses; society is revenged and purged so that peace may triumph and endure.

II

Tragedy of Character or Poetic Justice

A

The second interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet* regards the play as a tragedy of character. Critics of this persuasion assert that the lovers are not sacrificed for the expiation of social guilt, but are paying for their own tragic deficiencies.

Shakespeare was not writing a sermon on blood feuds but presenting a graphic illustration of the disaster which comes inevitably out of certain character defects in the lovers themselves. Just as Brutus illustrates the tragedy of blind idealism; Richard III and Macbeth, the tragedy of vaulting ambition; Hamlet, the fault of native resolution becoming "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," so Romeo and Juliet pay for the consequences of their rash and impetuous natures; hence Shakespeare wrote the play to exhibit not the revenge of society but the tragic folly of youth. The lovers are not innocent sufferers, or sacrifices, but heedless and reckless youth; like other tragic heroes they too have, as Hamlet phrases it, "some vicious mole of nature in them, and in the general censure take corruption from that particular fault." The following passage written by Professor Henneman,[3] a typical advocate of this view, will serve to reveal the faults he finds in these rash lovers—especially in Romeo.

> "Character is destiny. Romeo is precipitate; he goes to the Capulet ball uninvited; he jumps over the garden wall to speak with the girl

> he has just met, he marries Juliet off-hand, he comes between Tybalt and Mercutio, he slays the bloody Tybalt and later slays himself at the tomb of his lover—it is all of a piece. The tragedy comes from the qualities of Romeo's character and not from an unfavorable star or frowning Providence."

This last sentence you will note is sadly at odds with Stopford Brooke's interpretation. According to him the ends of justice are being achieved by shedding the blood of the innocent; according to the second, the lovers are suffering only the poetic justice they bring upon themselves.

If we wish to elaborate further upon the faults of the lovers, we might find a few more in Romeo that Professor Henneman neglected to mention. Romeo is so consumed by the passion of love that he never even thinks of marriage until Juliet proposes it; he then has no plans for carrying it out, or thought for the future. He leaves all the planning to Juliet and the Friar, as well as the carrying out of the plans. It is Juliet who arranges for the second meeting of the lovers at Friar Laurence's cell, and for access to her balcony room after the wedding; it is the Friar who proposes the death-like potion to prevent Juliet's marriage to Paris, and to reunite the lovers. While all this is going on Romeo acts like a child; he bewails and weeps his fate before it comes; he throws himself petulantly on the ground and raises such an unmanly commotion in the Friar's cell that even the Nurse is disgusted and the Friar sharply reproves him to bring him to his senses. (It is not realized apparently by critics of this school that Romeo, like Hamlet, is a typical Elizabethan distracted lover.) In fact, the only thing that Romeo characteristically does suggest is a rope ladder by which he can climb up to Juliet's balcony.

If we wish to find flaws in Juliet we can do no better than to con the pages of L. M. Watt,[4] who maintains that both lovers are victims "of their human passions and pride of the human will," and Juliet of sensuality:

> "Beautiful as love may be, and sweet as the affections of Romeo and Juliet are, they yet allow passion to overbalance them. Excess is their sin, which displaces the centre of gravity of their universe, and topples them to disaster. The constant association with the aged Nurse and her gross nature, through the proud neglect of Lady

> Capulet, her mother, has given an undeniably sensual bias to the love of Juliet, which, finding its counterpart in the hot nature of Romeo, draws them both blindly to gratification of appetite. Their speedy marriage without consultation, which, indeed, considering the relations of their families, would have been fruitless of aught but recrimination and outrage, plunges them straight into the vortex of destiny. The same passionate haste has made the world of Verona too narrow for the hate of the heads of the houses, and stains the streets with the blood of Mercutio; while the unbalanced, unrestrainable spirit of Romeo which carries him headlong into his matrimonial complications, heads him to the further disastrous deaths not only of Tybalt and Count Paris but also of himself."

Contemplate the mind of the critic that reduces *Romeo and Juliet* to a "matrimonial complication"! but let us proceed to reveal another fault Watt has overlooked: Juliet's deceitful nature, her capacity for lying to Paris and to her Mother and Father and doubtless we might find other "faults" if we wished to abandon our minds further to this ungracious kind of detraction.

B

The most recent attempt to discover a tragic flaw in Romeo is the learned discourse in a recent issue of the Bulletin (October, 1947) by H. Edward Cain who offers extensive testimony from More, La Primudays and other authorities describing the passion of anger, wrath, ire, choler, rage, fury, to prove that the character of Romeo is a study of the passions of anger. Romeo's giving way to "wild-eyed fury" is the inherent character flaw. Tragic fault, as Bradley also believes, is present.

In the first place, it may be said that Professor Draper's essay, *Shakespeare's "Star-Crossed Lovers."*[5] equally recondite in medieval and renaissance lore, presents an astonishing array of pseudo-science, astrology, and humour, to show why the play has "something of the inevitable sequence of Hellenic tragedy." As Cain himself concedes, the majority of critics regard the tragedy as one of fortune, and the lovers without blemish or blame.[6]

In the second place, it may be queried whether Romeo's anger can be regarded at all in the strict Aristotelian sense of tragic flaw. Aristotle's word, according to the best authorities, Bywater, Ross,

Atkins, refers only to tragic defects issuing not from passion or will, but from imperfect knowledge. Under the influence, however, of medieval conceptions of moral conscience tragic flaw long before Shakespeare had been extended to include faults of passion and will accompanied often by retribution or conviction or admission of sin, a conception indubitably prominent in Shakespeare's thought, born and brought up as he was on medieval Christian doctrines.

In the third place, it may be doubted whether Romeo's giving way to impetuosity and wrath can at all be considered a tragic fault. One can hardly hold a young renaissance lover to blame for the impetuosity of youth when love and honor are at stake, or expect him to exhibit the cool prudence of Friar Laurence's "wisely and slow, they stumble that run fast." The only fault in the impetuosity, the love and anger of Romeo, then, as well as in that of Juliet, is Youth, a condition that can hardly be equated to tragic flaw at all, whether in a classical, a medieval, a renaissance, or a modern sense. Moreover, as will be shown later, Friar Laurance's philosophy of prudence, highly recommended by Cain, suffers no better fate. *Romeo and Juliet* is not a tragedy that can be averted by reason and temperance. The fact that Shakespeare deliberately changed the heavily moralistic *Romeus and Juliet* of Arthur Brooke, his source, (upon which Cain draws at length)—particularly in removing all censure of the lovers, weighs heavily against Cain's thesis of moral fault in Romeo. For Professor Cain's purpose a better illustration of incarnate anger unrestrained would be Tybalt or of choleric anger, Old Capulet, who stand in pertinent contrast to Romeo's repeated endeavors to stay on-rushing calamity by controlling his ire in hopes first to avert the fight, and subsequently to avoid his duty to revenge the death of Mercutio. Under these extreme provocations, Romeo's efforts at control are little short of heroic; yet Cain gives them neither credit nor consideration. What, we may ask, would an Elizabethan audience have thought, or a modern audience for that matter, of a Romeo who, confronted by the slayer of his dearest friend, continued a prudent exhibition of a young man "too proud to fight?" Drama is not made that way. The same rejoinder may be made to Thomas P. Harrison, Jr.'s "Hang Up Philosophy"—and his effort to hang the play upon the Friar's philosophy of plants and Romeo's indulgence in "rude will." Heaven's "grace," exemplified earlier by the Friar, does not appear at all to aid the much distraught good man who is quite beside himself in Act V. His wisdom receives no

better shrift than Romeo's "fury." "God," one critic has remarked, "is a *name,* but not an *influence* in Shakespeare's plays." Religion never helps any one of his characters. Lærtes, contemplating mad Ophelia, exclaims: "Do you see this, O God?" and Macduff, hearing the calamity that has overcome his wife and babes, "Did Heaven look on and would not take their part?" Friar Laurence utters not a word of Christian comfort to Juliet in the tomb.

C

In view of these detractions that have been made by critics seeking according to questionable Aristotelian formulæ to find faults in the lovers in order to uphold a theory of tragic retribution, it is very much to the purpose to emphasize the tests of character which both lovers heroically met. There is little question that Juliet is the finer character of the two, but we should observe that in spite of his peevishness, his emotional excess, and his lack of forethought, Romeo is quite worthy of the devotion of his beloved. Whenever there comes a test, Romeo meets it like the heroic lover we would have him be. Note, for example, what restraint and self-control he shows in trying to stop the duel between Tybalt and Mercutio. How easy it would have been to jump into the fight at once in response to the taunts and insults of Tybalt. It is only when his friend Mercutio has been slain that he is compelled to exact his superior swordsmanship upon Tybalt who "fights by the book of arithmetic." There is no lack of manliness here, nor at any other point in the play when a crisis has to be met, whether it be his second forced duel with Paris in the tomb or his determination to live no longer when he hears the false news of Juliet's death.

If Romeo's essential manliness is equal to the crises of his life, Juliet throughout exhibits a strength of character that may be matched with that of any other Shakespearean heroine. Ophelia and Desdemona can but suffer in dumb helplessness from forces beating upon them which they never understand and with which they cannot cope. The nerves of both Portia, Brutus' wife, and of Lady Macbeth are shattered by suspense and dread in spite of their heroic wills; Cordelia has her husband and Kent to aid her in her counterplots. In contrast stands the heroism of Juliet, the presence of mind that she retains in every crisis in spite of the emotional turmoil to which she is subjected. It may be ventured that no woman in Shakespeare

suffers such prolonged and unrelieved emotional stress; and we should remember that it is not mental activity but emotional turmoil that leaves men and women torn and exhausted. Shocked from simple and innocent girlhood by the sudden love for Romeo, like women in every walk of life, she had to bear the severest burdens. The tragic fatality of finding herself suddenly in love with an enemy, the anxieties of planning for the marriage are mere preliminaries to her sufferings. In Act III, Scene II, when she is on the very heights of ecstasy anticipating her lover, in comes the Nurse with news that Romeo has slain Tybalt, and we watch Juliet torn between her feelings of loyalty to her kinsman and her love for Romeo. Upon this follows the last meeting at night and the painful parting at daybreak when she inquires of Romeo:

> "O, think'st thou we shall ever meet again?"

but in spite of Romeo's assurances, she was never again to see him alive. After he has gone, how characteristically she cries out on Fortune:

> "O fortune, fortune! all men call thee fickle:
> If thou art fickle, what dost thou with him
> That is renown'd for faith? Be fickle, fortune;
> For then, I hope, thou wilt not keep him long,
> But send him back."

From this point on, however, she is allowed not a moment's relief from emotional tension for immediately Lady Capulet enters to announce that Juliet is to marry Paris—"early next Thursday morning," —a date that subsequently is speedily advanced to Wednesday, a proposal which results in the violent scene with her parents and the disgraceful abuse they pour upon her. The Nurse to whom she finally appeals then abandons her cause, and urges her to compromise and marry Paris. She meets this test by cleverly seeming to consent, but keeping her ulterior purpose fast hidden within her own soul. Even then there is not a moment's relief, for in comes Paris to press again his unwelcome attentions, and Juliet has to continue playing the difficult role of seeming to receive his tenders of affection. She then appeals to the Friar, only to be confronted with his desperate plan of the sleeping potion; and in the midst of the commotion in the house in preparation for her hasty wedding, she finally perceives that her dismal scene she must enact alone; and she retires to struggle with her fears in this marvelous soliloquy:

"Farewell! God knows when we shall meet again.
I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins,
That almost freezes up the heat of life:
I'll call them back again to comfort me.
Nurse!—What should she do here?
My dismal scene I needs must act alone.
Come, vial.
What if this mixture do not work at all?
Shall I be married then to-morrow morning?
No, no: this shall forbid it. Lie thou there.

[*Laying down a dagger.*

What if it be a poison, which the friar
Subtly hath minister'd to have me dead,
Lest in this marriage he should be dishonour'd,
Because he married me before to Romeo?
I fear it is: and yet, methinks, it should not,
For he hath still been tried a holy man.
How if, when I am laid into the tomb,
I wake before the time that Romeo
Come to redeem me? there's a fearful point.
Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,
And there die strangled ere my Romeo comes?
Or, if I live, is it not very like,
The horrible conceit of death and night,
Together with the terror of the place,
As in a vault, an ancient receptacle,
Where for these many hundred years the bones
Of all my buried ancestors are pack'd;
Where bloody Tybalt, yet but green in earth,
Lies festering in his shroud; where, as they say,
At some hours in the night spirits resort;
Alack, alack, is it not like that I
So early waking, what with loathsome smells
And shrieks like mandrakes' torn out of the earth,
That living mortals hearing them run mad:
O, if I wake, shall I not be distraught,
Environed with all these hideous fears?
And madly play with my forefathers' joints?
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud?
And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
As with a club, dash out my desperate brains?

> O, look! methinks I see my cousins's ghost
> Seeking out Romeo, that did spit his body
> Upon a rapier's point: stay, Tybalt, stay!
> Romeo, I come! this do I drink to thee." (IV, 3.)

It is a wonder of wonders indeed, that under such incessant nervous tension, driven in upon herself and tossed hither and yon with doubts, she could have kept so steadfast to her purpose, and so heroically have enacted this dismal scene alone.

To those who censure the lovers for rash and passionate excess, it may be said that it is incredible how critical minds should be so blind to the character values in this play. John Erskine has given the final verdict on this point:

> "For of all the immortal lovers of drama and story Romeo and Juliet are surely outstanding in the combined purity and passion of their motives. For great as are the loves of ancient story, of Helen, of Cleopatra, of Iseult, of Heloise, of Guinevere and of their lovers, they are obscured by meanness, by trickery, and by broken vows. We do not look to them for the ideals we would wish our modern youth to emulate."[8]

When we witness Romeo and Juliet caught in the toils of hate and chance, we wonder which of us would not be lovers to the death if our passions could attain such ardor and loveliness, such fidelity and strength as theirs. It is harsh indeed to censure Romeo and Juliet because they love with the wild ardor and idealism of youth. Rather do the devotion and beauty of these lovers shine forth as fixed stars against the dark background of a universe, as in *King Lear,* not ordered to satisfy the desires of men.

III

Tragedy of Fortune

A

The third interpretation regards the play as a tragedy of Fortune; it does not exhibit the workings of an external social justice, nor disclose any censurable faults in the lovers. As Professor Kittredge pronounces in no uncertain terms: "Romeo and Juliet—is a

fatalistic drama."[7] While it is true that the lovers are sacrificed on the altar of family hatred, no spectator ever views the tragedy as anything but what the title indicates, namely, the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet. If Shakespeare had intended a tragedy of the Houses (like Lope de Vega, who wrote a play on the same story) he would have called his play The Tragedy of the Capulets and Montagues; on the contrary he tells in his prologue that we are to witness "a pair of Star-Crossed lovers"—doomed by blind fortune to disaster even before they begin their tempestuous love-making. If we are responsive to the motives of Fortune, which are repeatedly struck throughout this play as in the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven or in Tschaikowsky's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, we shall perceive that the disaster overwhelming Romeo and Juliet is caused at last not by the hate of the Houses or by defects of character, but by a series of unlucky accidents; and that the final determining accident, which brings the lovers to their doom,—the failure of Friar John to deliver to Romeo the letter telling him that Juliet was not dead,—is one for which no one is responsible:

> "As in Greek tragedy," remarks one critic, "we follow the story not with eager curiosity as to how it will terminate; we know from the first that the lovers are doomed. What we watch for is the means by which Fortune spreads her nets for their feet, the means by which they struggle to avoid them and the lovely flaming colors of passion which their alternating moments of joy and despair bring into their faces, their hearts, and their speech. When they seem nearest deliverance Shakespeare unresistingly makes the final stroke of fate one of merest chance, so completely unrelated to the principal action that the tragic plot seems actually to be forgotten or destroyed."

This final catastrophe is due, then, not to weakness of character, not to the feud between Montague and Capulet, but to the accidental detention in quarantine of the letter-bearer Friar John, a hitherto unheard of person—"an ill-unlucky thing," as Friar Laurence says, that only heightens our tragic impressions of the lovers as hopelessly at the mercy of Fortune's whims.

Let us trace this hand of Fate or of Fortune, as the Elizabethans term it, and see how the lovers are destined to be the blameless victims not only of family hatred, but of obvious accident and chance.

In harmony with the prologue which tells us that Romeo and Juliet are to be revealed as "a pair of star-crossed lovers," we observe them repeatedly crying out against the accidents of Fortune; their ill-divining souls are constantly harrowed by fears like those Romeo expresses when against his will he goes with his friends to Capulet's ball:

> Romeo. And we mean well, in going to this mask;
> But 'tis no wit to go.
> \- - - - - - - - - -
> Ben. Supper is done and we shall come too late.
> Romeo. I fear, too early; for my mind misgives
> Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
> Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
> With this night's revels, and expire the term
> Of a despised life closed in my breast
> By some vile forfeit of untimely death.
> (I, 4, 105-11)

Note too the repeated references throughout to the stars, and the numerous occasions when the finger of Fortune thrusts awry the best laid plans of the lovers and of their good shepherd, Friar Laurence. It is by mere chance that, through the illiterate servant of the Capulets, the invitation falls into the hands of the Montagues, and we have just seen Romeo had no wish to go to the ball where he met Juliet. The fatality of this situation is emphasized by Juliet's exclamation:

> "My only love sprung from my only hate,
> Too early seen unknown, and known too late."
> (I, 5, 140-1)

It was no fault of his that Romeo became involved in the death of Tybalt. Mercutio stirs up the fray. Romeo uses all his persuasion to pacify Tybalt, and when finally he can do nothing in honor but avenge Mercutio's death, how characteristically he exclaims:

> "O, I am fortune's fool." (III, 1, 141)

Even Friar Laurence when he hears the news of Romeo's predicament thinks him fated:

"Romeo, come forth, come forth thou fearful man:
Affliction is enamour'd of thy parts,
And thou art wedded to calamity."
(III, 3, 1-3)

To censure the lovers for their impetuous devotion is to censure youth because it is not middle age, for what churlish spirit would wish them to be less radiant in their mutual passion and adoration? Yet the prudence of the Friar meets no better end. For had not Fortune thwarted the Friar's plan, was there not as good a chance of reconciling the families in this way as by the needless sacrifice of the lovers? Believing as a holy man that the world is directed by providential wisdom, and that in this life "grey-eyed morn smiles on the frowning night," he did not reckon, in his precarious plan to reunite the lovers, upon the hazards and accidents that thwart life's fairest hopes. Like Romeo, when he came between Tybalt and Mercutio, Friar Laurence "thought all for the best." It was no fault of his that Friar John, who bore the news of Juliet's simulated death, was caught in a quarantined city, and failed to reach Romeo, or that Romeo on hearing the report of Juliet's death was left to hurl his challenge.

"Is it even so? then I defy you, stars!" (V, 1, 24)

It is fate again that Juliet awakens from her death-like sleep only a moment after Romeo's death. No wonder is it, then, that when Friar Laurence tries to persuade Juliet to come away from the body of her lover, he does not proffer the official comforts of his religion by talk of Providence and a future in heaven, arguments which he had previously used to silence the wailing Capulets:

"- - - - - Heaven and yourself
Had part in this fair maid; now heaven hath all."
(IV, 5, 66-7)

but, shaken to the bottom of his soul by the awful realization of the "ill-unlucky thing" he had been fearing as he "stumbled at graves" on his way to the tomb, he utters those fateful words which strike the keynote of this tragedy and of all such tragedies of fate or fortune:

"A greater power than we can contradict
Hath thwarted our intents."
(V, 3, 153-4)

Hardly any character in the play undergoes a greater transformation than Friar Laurence. Calm and fortified by his philosophy that good always comes out of evil, a doctrine he expounds at length in Act II, Scene 3:

> "For nought so vile that on the earth doth live
> But to the earth some special good doth give,"

he lived to say in Act V:

> "- - - - - Ah, what an unkind hour
> Is guilty of this lamentable chance!"
> (V, 3, 145 ff)

Firm believer in prudence and providential wisdom, this benevolent man becomes a trembling, fearful being, quite beside himself, rushing hither and yon, and away at the sound of noises, leaving Juliet alone, only to find himself apprehended by the suspicious watch:

> 3. Watch. "Here is a friar, that trembles, sighs, and weeps."
> 1. Watch. "A great suspicion. Stay the friar too."
> (V, 3, 184ff)

Shakespeare, however permits the Friar to deliver a long explanation and a justification of his conduct (V, 3, 229ff) by referring to "accident" as the cause of the disaster—and ending:

> "- - - - - if aught in this
> Miscarried by my fault, let my old life
> Be sacrific'd, some hour before his time,
> Unto the rigour of severest law." (V, 3, 266ff)

Shakespeare, who condemns no one, has the Prince absolve the Friar in the brief sentence:

> "We still have known thee for a holy man."
> (V, 3, 270)

Verily there were more things in heaven and earth than were anticipated in Friar Laurence's philosophy. Fatalistic tragedy though it be interpreted, *Romeo and Juliet,* unlike the modern fatalistic

tragedy of O'Neill or of Andrieff in his *Life of Man* does not leave us depressed or crushed with hopeless sorrow at the close, or paralyzed by a fear of doom; on the contrary, we leave the theatre compensated not because the reconciled families are to raise gold statues to the glorious lovers, but because we are filled with admiration for their devotion and fidelity. We perceive that love has triumphed even in the face of crass casualty and death. When Romeo over the death-like form of Juliet breathes forth his last defiance of the stars, we hear no note of defeat, but the voice of something that Death and Fortune cannot touch.

"- - - - - O give me thy hand,—
One writ with me in sour misfortune's book"
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
"Ah, dear Juliet,
Why art thou yet so fair? shall I believe
That unsubstantial death is amorous,
And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
Thee here in dark to be his paramour?
For fear of that, I still will stay with thee,
And never from this palace of dim night
Depart again: here, here will I remain
With worms that are thy chamber-maids; O, here
Will I set up my everlasting rest,
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last!
Arms, take your last embrace! and lips, O you
The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
A datelss bargain to engrossing death!
Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavoury guide!
Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on
The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark.
Here's to my love! [*Drinks*]. O true apothecary!
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die. [*Dies.*"

Romeo and Juliet, like all other Shakespeare heroes, meet disaster with a bravery and eloquence that make their deaths insignificant.

B

This reduction of Romeo and Juliet to a tragedy of Fortune, however persuasive, suffers like the other two interpretations, from arbitrary selection, from over-simplification and from modern bias.

No matter how prevalent may be the references to Fortune, they should not be interpreted in the modern fatalistic formula of Eugene O'Neill or Joseph Wood Krutch.[9] As Professor Patch has explained in his illuminating articles previously referred to, Fortune and Providence as employed in the renaissance—in fact ever since Boethius —meant virtually the same thing; since the accidents and chances of Fortune were regarded as under the control and a part of the permissive will of an all-wise Providence. Fortune and Providence were not so sharply differentiated as they are today, nor is it likely that they were in Shakespeare's mind. In the very speech when Romeo is disclaiming against Fortune and the stars

> "for my mind misgives
> Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars."

he immediately adds:

> "But He, that hath the steerage of my course,
> Direct my sail!" (I, 4, 112-3)

showing that in Romeo's mind the stars in their courses as well as all human fate were directed by Providence.

Moreover, it is dubious also to insinuate that the Friar's philosophy collapses in Act V when he exclaims:

> "A greater power than we can contradict
> Hath thwarted our intents."

Though the Friar's wisdom receives no better shrift than Romeo's fury, for the best-laid plans of even holy men go oft' awry, there is no evidence that his settled religious view of the world is changed at all; for he begs Juliet to come forth and join "a sisterhood of holy nuns;" and in his defense he says:

> "- - - - - I entreated her come forth,
> And bear this work of heaven with patience:
> But then a noise did scare me from the tomb,
> And she too desperate would not go with me."
> (V, 3, 260-4)

IV

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter? To return to the more difficult question first propounded: What was Shakespeare's intent in writing *Romeo and Juliet?* Who can believe that Shakespeare composed this play to set forth any one of these doctrines, whether of family hate, of personal fault, or of Love versus Fortune? These captions, Tragedy of Social, or Poetical Justice, or Fortune, are the conscientious generalizations of moralists, of philosophers or of scholar theorists enabling us to elucidate the tragic values they have seen and felt while watching or studying the play, and who shall deny any one of them to expound as he pleases. Do we not have in *Romeo and Juliet* what may be called a nicely balanced play of all these forces? That is what we mean when we talk about the universality of art, in which, according to our little lights, our tastes, and our moral prepossessions, some of us see and stress one aspect, and others of us emphasize another. The myriad-minded Shakespeare takes no partial views; he reveals the whole.

Finally, what Shakespeare was most intent upon as a dramatist, we may be sure, was to write a captivating love story for his audience in the theatre and not to expound a philosophy or to illustrate a theory of tragedy or to moralize upon the time, content merely to please, "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

Lehigh University

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[1]H. R. Patch, *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages,* III, nos. 3, 4; IV, no. 4, 1922-3; also *The Tradition of Boethius,* N. Y., 1935.

[2]S. A. Brooke, *On Ten Plays of Shakespeare,* London, 1920, pp. 35ff.

[3]J. B. Henneman, *Shakespearean and Other Papers,* University Press of Tennessee, 1911, p. 38.

[4]L. M. Watt, *Attic and Elizabethan Tragedy,* London, 1908, pp. 250-1.

[5]J. W. Draper, *Shakespeare's "Star Crossed Lovers,"* Review of English Studies, xv, no. 57, January, 1939.

[6]Boas, Draper, Nicoll, Neilson, Parrott, et al.

[7]G. L. Kittredge, *Romeo and Juliet,* Ginn, 1940, Int. xii. Nor should anyone miss Professor Kittredge's admirable spoofing essay: *New Light on Romeo and Juliet,* The Club of Odd Volumes, Boston, 1942, a devastating attack upon the Winstanley-Harrison School of "topical significances,"—critics who maintain that Shakespeare's plays are veiled allegories on contemporary personages and political events, Juliet in Kittredge's take-off being Lady Francis Howard; Romeo, Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset; Count Paris, the Earl of Essex; and the Prince, King James.

[8]Matthews and Thorndike, *Shakespearean Studies,* Columbia University Press, N. Y., 1916, p. 234.

[9]Joseph Wood Krutch, *The Modern Temper,* N. Y., 1929.

THE ROARING BOY AGAIN

By William Peery

(Part II)

IF WE exclude from consideration Milligan's citations concerning rioters in general and confine our attention to those which concern roaring boys proper, we must conclude that Milligan has failed to show roaring boys as "numerous much earlier and much later" than the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. The bulk of his evidence clearly shows, on the contrary, that the *O. E. D.* definition is substantially correct as to date; and Milligan's first alleged misconception is seen to be no misconception at all.

Of Milligan's citations within the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, furthermore, not all can be called references to roaring boys. Lodge in the passages quoted[43] was writing of Brawling Contention,[44] a personification comparable to his Blasphemy and Sedition.[45] Although Brawling Contention is called "a Ruffian, a Swashbuckler, and a Bragart,"[46] he is not called a roaring boy. Milligan's quotation[47] from Everard Guilpin's *Skialetheia* (1598), Satire V, describes the behavior of the regular patrons of Bloom's ordinary, not of roaring boys.[48] The passage quoted[49] from *Measure for Measure* (1604) describes the patrons of Mistress Overdone's establishment in prison.[50] They, and not as Milligan says,[51] roaring boys, are said to be "all great doers in our trade." Indeed, of most of Milligan's examples one must say, with Will Rash in *Greenes Tu Quoque* (1611), "This is no angry, nor no roaring boy, but a blustering boy."[52] Milligan's important allowable evidence from literature within the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods is virtually limited to four works, which contain, it must be admitted, very few of the roaring boys in Tudor and Stuart literature: 1) Wither, *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (1613); 2) John Webster, "A Roaring Boy," incorrectly attributed to Overbury[53]; 3) the ballad, "I Know What I know" (*ca.* 1620)[54]; and 4) Rowlands, "A Roaring Boyes Description" (*ca.* 1620). Milligan does

not mention what is probably the best treatment of roarers, that by Paul Reyher,[55] which draws on all these sources except the ballad, and on a number of important sources which Milligan leaves untouched.[56] Other significant sources, however, are treated by neither Reyher nor Milligan.[57]

Milligan alleges a second misconception, relative to the social status of roaring boys:

> Because in literature roaring boys are not infrequently depicted as petty thieves and swindlers masking their nefarious activities under pretensions to gallantry and fashion, some commentators have been misled, I believe, into assuming that thievery and the pretended character of a gentleman are as definitely typical of the roaring boys as roistering, bullying, and vandalism.[58]

Let us consider first how prevalent this alleged misconception is, second whether or not it is a misconception.

The only authority cited by Milligan in evidence of this "misconception" is Mr. Daniel C. Boughner, who says:

> Pistol's ups and downs form a slice-of-life picture of the roaring boy, who on his more respectable side is a follower of the fashions and a pretender to gentlemanly attributes, but on his seamier side is the petty thief and haunter of the tavern and the brothel.[59]

Milligan asks one to compare another statement by Boughner, that Pistol "seems closely modeled after a common Elizabethan type, the roaring boy, whose characteristics he displays. . ."[60] But to speak of a more respectable and a seamier side of the roaring boy seems to be different from stating that "thievery and the pretended character of a gentleman are as definitely typical of the roaring boys as roistering, bullying, and vandalism." The matter is, of course, one of degree; and it is hard to say whether one thing is "as definitely typical" of someone than is another thing because it is hard to define "definitely typical." One may fairly infer what Milligan means, however, by his statements elsewhere. The facts that many roaring boys are depicted as "mere thugs, criminals, and professional bullies"[61] and that in many portraits of roaring boys "there is little suggestion of the young gentlemen or aristocrat who occasionally indulges in an evening of debauchery and riot,"[62] perhaps have tended, according to Milligan,

"to narrow the modern student's conception of the roaring boy."[63]

Few readers of Boughner's article, however, are likely to conclude that the author holds this narrow conception—indeed, the breadth of his conception is evidenced by his speaking of a more respectable and a seamier side—or that he regards thievery as prerequisite to roaring. Boughner is careful to state his case in terms of resemblances between Pistol's behavior and that of specific roaring boys and roarers.[64] Boughner, moreover, does not confine his discussion to roaring boys but points out that Pistol resembles other contemporary types as well.[65] Milligan has not shown that Boughner, or any other "commentators have been misled" as to the place of thievery and pretense of gentility in roaring.[66] Milligan's second alleged misconception has not been shown to be prevalent.

The question of the social status of the roaring boy, I think, has really not been studied. The evidence for it is the evidence we have been considering, and again we must confine ourselves to roaring boys so termed. Excluding Milligan's "historical" examples, which were not so termed, one at once excludes most of the aristocrats who occasionally indulge in an evening's debauchery and riot. Not all of the remaining pieces of evidence cited by Milligan are helpful at this juncture. The author of "I Know What I know" does not commit himself as to the social status of roaring boys. According to Rowlands, "the choisest, loving, dearest friends" roaring boys have are "punke and pander, thiefe, and coozening knave; Sharke, shifter, cheater, cutpurse, highway stander." These are represented as associating with, not as being equivalent to, roaring boys.[67] But Rowlands' evidence is divided, for he goes on to say that "Your Roring-Boy is come of such a strain." It may be felt that even Wither's testimony leaves the issue somewhat doubtful:

> Yet these base slaues (whose lewdnesse I confesse
> I cannot find words able to expresse)
> Are Great-mens darlings; (As some vnderstand)
> The absolutest *Gallants* in this Land.
> And onely men of spirit of our time,
> But this opinion's but a vulgar crime.[68]

Wither refers to them also as "base Brotherhood" and "No common fellowes"; but according to Wither the only respect in which they excel is villany. Wither does not state, on the other hand, that they

are professional criminals. He attacks them for drinking, swearing, lechery, noise, and godlessness,[69] not for criminality. Webster's testimony is clearer. Although his roaring boy may have been well descended, he now lives by borrowing and does not pay for his drink.[70] With him roaring is evidently a full-time occupation. Webster's points against the roaring boy are that he regards himself as a person of privilege[71]; that he affects illiteracy; that he interests himself in quarrels among the great courtiers; that he is a cheater of rustics, a self-appointed reformer of prostitutes,[72] an imposer on his friends, a constant smoker, and an habitual drunkard.[73] Webster does not regard him as part of London's organized vice; he is no professional criminal. Neither is he a nobleman who occasionally indulges in an evening of debauchery; indeed, part of Webster's satire is against his interest in the quarrels of those above him socially. The three roaring boys in "The cheating Age," too, are clearly not gentlemen amateurs at rioting. The "Roarer with long shaggy lockes" is "New broke out fro Newgate, the Cage, or some Stocks"[74]; he is a "totterd grim Rascall" who makes horrible faces.[75] His two companions are "creatures in torne totterd cases," who have "swolne eyes, & patcht faces."[76] Although there is no definite statement as to the social status of the roaring boy in *The Wandering Jew,* he is not a noble amateur but a professional roaring boy: "a Battoon Gallant, one of our Dammees, a bouncing boy, a kicker of bawds, a tyrant over punks, a terror to fencers, a mewer of plays, a jeerer of poets, a gallonpot-flinger, in rugged English, a Roarer."[77] He differs from Webster's roaring boy in possessing a love of learning, though the knowledge he evidences is limited to the history of murder.[78] Turning to evidence from the drama, Milligan would seem to agree[79] that the majority of roaring boys there represent not aristocrats but the dregs of London's streets: Kastril in *The Alchemist,* Cutting and Knock-hum in *Bartholomew Fair,* the roisterer driven from the stage by Spendall in *Greenes Tu Quoque,* and the rabble who take Pharamond prisoner in *Philaster.*

From the evidence discussed so far, then, it would appear that the roaring boy proper was not a young gentleman indulging in occasional debauchery. It would appear, also, that he was not necessarily a professional criminal with a place in organized vice as described, say, by Middleton and Rowley[80] or in the anatomies of roguery such as Awdeley's or Harman's.[81] He was, rather, a professional bully and reveler whose roaring was not so much a way of obtaining a living as itself a way of life.[82] The pattern of his behavior may

readily be pieced together from the many accounts of and references to it in Elizabethan and Jacobean literature. Although derived in part from evidence which can not be admitted, Milligan's description of this pattern is not incorrect in its broad outlines. His deductions from the evidence, however, seem highly questionable. It would appear that the modern student perhaps needs to narrow still further his conception of the roaring boy to exclude both the aristocrat who occasionally riots and the professional criminal. Certainly the majority of the allowable evidence does not show, as Milligan claims, that "during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the term *roaring boy* was applied, rather indiscriminately," both to "boisterous young gentlemen" and to "petty swindlers, who imitated the 'fashionable' excesses of such young bloods."[83] These conclusions are borne out by two important additional pieces of evidence, to which let us turn.

An entire scene of Nathan Field's *Amends for Ladies* (1618) is devoted to showing a group of roaring boys in action and developing one of the lesser plot-threads of this comedy, the "fleshing" of the coward Lord Feesimple, who can not "endure the sight of any edge-tool."[84] In Act III, Scene 4,[85] Welltried takes Lord Feesimple to a tavern where the roaring boys Whorebang, Bots, Tearchaps, and Spillblood, terrible fellows with *"several patches on their faces,"*[86] are threatening to drown the helpless drawer in a butt of Malmsey unless he brings them more drink. Feesimple is at first afraid and wishes he had taken out insurance against his safe return.[87] Welltried, not one of the roaring boys but accepted by them, asks their indulgence of Feesimple. Learning of his affliction, Whorebang claps his sword on the table as an experiment. Feesimple makes ready to swoon, but sack restores him. Welltried quietly asks him, "what will you say if I make you beat all these out of the room?"[88] That, thinks Feesimple, is impossible; but Welltried assures him that it can be done because roaring boys are really cowards; their gashed faces were given them not by fencers but by their whores, who "strike 'em with cans and glasses, and quart-pots."[89] With the roarers they drink three healths to four of the Seven Deadly Sins. A quarrel arises, aggravated by Feesimple's presumption in daring to use the oath of the roaring boys, *Damn me,* and in the riot which follows the roaring boys are driven from the tavern. Feesimple is fleshed and begs Welltried, "If you love me, let's go break windows somewhere."[90] Welltried refuses to be "shot-log to such" as the roaring boys and tells the drawer to take their cloaks, left behind as they ran, for the reckoning. The grate-

ful drawer blesses Welltried for ridding the house of them. When Feesimple becomes sober next morning, he realizes the truth of what Welltried had said in the tavern, "many a Roarer thus is made by wine."[91] But his new valor persists, and in Act V, Scene 2 he exhibits the roaring boys' manner and language, the right to use which he has now fully earned.[92]

Much concerned with roaring boys and roaring is Middleton and Rowley's *A Fair Quarrel* (1617). Chough and Trimtram provide the satire by attending a school for roaring boys set up by the Colonel's Friend.[93] Roaring is a "mathematical science"[94]; one may learn to roar in several languages: "Sclavonian, Parthamenian, Barmeothian, Tyburnian, Wappinganian,"[95] at a cost of forty pounds, half in advance and half when "allowed a sufficient roarer."[96] As Trimtram tells Chough, one "must learn to roar here in London; you'll never proceed in the reputation of gallantry else."[97] The play contains information on the history of roaring. The practice began, according to Trimtram, with Long Meg, a great cannon in the Tower. The Tower lions learned to roar from the cannon, and the bears in Paris Garden on the Bankside learned roaring from the lions. "Then the boys got it, and so ever since there have been a company of roaring boys."[98] One of the main ends in roaring is, after the quarrels, "to make all friends" in wine; " 'tis valiant, but harmless"[99]; another is to frighten one's creditors from collecting what one owes them.[100]

Amends for Ladies and *A Fair Quarrel* are related, also, in having a similar bibliographical history. Their first quartos present peculiarities which may be of relevance here. In the second issue of *A Fair Quarrel,* in the year of the first edition, were added *"new Additions of Mr. Chaughs and Trimtram's Roaring, and the Bauds Song,"*[101] In these additions, which comprise Act IV, Scene 4, Chough and Trimtram practice their newly acquired ability to roar on Captain Albo, who is so favorably impressed that he goes off at once to learn the art of roaring himself. This interpolation, which is irrelevant to the plot of *A Fair Quarrel,* may well have been made for reasons of popular appeal. *Amends for Ladies,* too, had a second issue in its first year.[102] Beyond minor variants arguing a correction of certain forms while the book was at press,[103] the only difference in the second issue, however, is that its title-page contains the words, "WITH / THE HVMOR / OF *RORING.*"[104] In the year 1618 roaring seems to have

been of some special significance to the printer Eld or the publisher Walbank and, presumably, to their customers.

As we have seen, roaring boys can be placed, roughly, in Elizabethan and Jacobean times; but it may be possible to date the time of their flourishing somewhat more definitely. Field helps us when he has Pendant, the sycophant in *A Woman Is a Weathercock* (1612), say, upon fearing a duel, "I had as lief meet Hector, God knows. . .or, to speak more modernly, with one of the roaring boys."[105] Roaring boys were still flourishing the following year, evidently; for in *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (1613), on a page cited by Milligan,[106] Wither complains,

> But yet, there is a crew that much annoyes
> The Common-weale, some call them *Roaring-boyes;*
> *London* doth harbour many at this time,
> And now I thinke their Order's in the Prime
> And flourishing estate.[107]

The testimony of Field and Wither is sustained by the fact that almost all of the allowable references to roaring boys mentioned in this paper fall within the decade, 1610-1620.[108] And the bibliographical evidence from two plays devoting considerable space to roaring boys pointing to a heightened contemporary interest in roaring and roaring boys in 1617 and 1618, may quite possibly indicate a superior claim for the last five years of that decade.

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[43]Milligan, *op. cit.*, p. 187.
[44]*Wits Miserie and the Worlds Madnesse* (1596), *The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge* (4 vols.; Hunterian Club, 1883), IV, 68-71.
[45]*Ibid.*, 71-73, 73. [46]*Ibid.*, p. 68. [47]*Op. cit.*, p. 185.
[48]Available in Shakespeare Association Facsimiles, No. 2 (London, 1931), without pagination.
[49]*Op. cit.*, pp. 187 and 190, n. 6.
[50]Ed. Kittredge, 4.3.1-21.
[51]*Op. cit.*, p. 187.
[52]*Dodsley*[4], XI, 198.
[53]For a summary of the controversy over the authorship of Webster's characters see F. L. Lucas, ed., *The Complete Works of John Webster* (4 vols.; London, 1927), IV, 6-14. It is surprising that Milligan makes so little use of this character, one of the best of the full portraits of the roaring boy.
[54]Titled "Few Words are best" in *A Book of Roxburghe Ballads,* ed. J. P. Collier (London, 1847), 97-103.

[55]*Les Masques Anglais* (Paris, 1909), pp. 259-266. Why Milligan did not draw heavily on this work is hard to explain. He probably knew of it since he cites Graves, who cites Reyher. Graves, incidentally, erroneously cites the final page as 264 [*op. cit.*, p. 396, n. 6].

[56]These include, among others, Brathwaite, *The English Gentleman* and *Whimzies;* Jordan, *Pictures of Passions, Fancies, Affections;* Rowlands, *The Night Raven;* Jonson, *Epicoene;* Field, *Amends for Ladies;* and Middleton and Rowley, *A Fair Quarrel.*

[57]"The brave English Gipsey" in a ballad of that title protests that his associates "are no roaring boyes" [*A Book of Roxburghe Ballads,* p. 185]. Old Mull'd-sack in "The Times Abuses" contrasts his behavior with that of roaring boys, whom he indicts, and wonders why men choose to scorn him [*ibid.,* pp. 282f.]. Sir John Melton describes the roaring boy in *The Astrologaster* (1620), p. 72. Certainly these two last-mentioned works deserve mention in a survey of the roaring boy.

[58]*Op. cit.,* p. 184.

[59]"Pistol and the Roaring Boys," *SAB,* XI (1936), 227.

[60]*Ibid.,* pp. 236f. Milligan [*op. cit.,* p. 190, n. 2] misquotes "seems closely modeled" as "is clearly modeled" and cites only p. 237.

[61]*Op. cit.,* p. 189.

[62]*Ibid.*

[63]*Ibid.*

[64]E. g., he says, "Like Brawling Contention" [*op. cit.,* p. 228]; "like the drunken knave in *Diogenes Lanthorne*" [*ibid.*]; "Pistol is such a coward at heart as the roarer described by Brathwait" [*ibid.,* p. 229]; "His sidestepping the blame and his cowing Silence in Shallow's garden are reminiscent of Overbury's [*sic*] Roaring Boy" [*ibid.,* p. 230], etc.

[65]E. g., "he seems compounded with the bogus traveller . . .; with the 'affectuate Traveller' . . .; with the mighty gallant. . .; and with the 'needie gallaunt'. . ." [*op. cit.,* pp. 232f.].

[66]He might have found both "les jeunes gens qui, sans penser á mal, s'amusent et font des folies" and "professionnels roarers in Reyher [*op. cit.,* p. 265]; but Reyher does not imply that roaring boys have to be thieves.

[67]*The Four Knaues,* ed. E. F. Rimbault (Percy Society; London, 1843), xii-xiii.

[68]*Abuses Stript and Whipt* [*Juvenilia: Poems by George Wither* (Spenser Society, 1871; 2 vols.), I, 243-244].

[69]*Ibid.*

[70]"Hee hath runne through divers parcells of Land, and great houses, beside both the Counters" [*op. cit.,* p. 31]; "The Tenure by which he holds his means, is an estate at Will; and that's borrowing" [p. 32]; "a man of no *reckoning*" [p. 32].

[71]"His life is a meere counterfeit Patent" [*ibid.,* p. 31].

[72]"He is a *Supervisor* to Brothels, and in them is a more unlawfull reformer of vice, then Prentises on Shrove-tuesday" [*op. cit.,* p. 31].

[73]"When hee goes not drunke to bed, he is very sicke next morning." [*ibid.,* p. 32].

[74]*Pepysian Garland,* p. 245.

[75]*Ibid.*

[76]*Ibid.,* p. 246. These roaring boys differ from the majority of their fellows in being cheaters at dice and, to that degree, criminals and if one wishes part of organized vice. But I agree with Milligan that "In a lesser number of literary references, the offenses attributed to roaring boys indicate that some who went by the name were indeed swindlers, thieves, and bullies of the lowest class" [*op. cit.,* p. 187]. Perhaps the nature of the story being told—how Leonard of Lincoln, on a journey to London, induced to play, is cheated out of his money and left to pay the reckoning with his cloak and rapier—determined this difference.

[77]Aldington, *op. cit.,* p. 383.

[78]*Ibid.,* pp. 383f.

[79]Milligan, *op. cit.,* p. 189. The last three examples, *however,* are mine.

[80]Cf. Moll Cutpurse's exposition of its cant in *The Roaring Girl,* 5.1 [*The Works of Thomas Middleton,* ed. A. H. Bullen (8 vols.; London, 1885), IV, 129ff.] Perhaps Moll herself, as the only example in literature of the roaring girl [Nares, *Glossary, s.* roaring boy], might have been found deserving of mention in a survey of the roaring boy in Tudor and Stuart literature.

[81]*The Fraternitye of Vacabondes* and *A Caueat or Warening for Common Cursetors* are edited by E. Viles and F. J. Furnivall in *The Rogues and Vagabonds of Shakspere's Youth* (New Shakspere Society; London, 1880).

[82]This point of view is supported by Graves, who writes: "While these disturbers of the peace were always objectionable in their language and behavior, the majority of them seem to have been essentially harmless and disassociated with organized vice." [*op. cit.,* p. 396].

[83]Milligan, *op. cit.,* p. 184.

[84]*Dodsley*[4], XI, 103.

[85]*Ibid.,* pp. 135-141.

[86]*Ibid.,* p. 135.

[87]*Ibid.,* p. 137.

[88]*Ibid.,* p. 137.

[89]*Ibid.*

[90]*Ibid.,* p. 141.

[91]*Ibid.*

[92]*Ibid.,* pp. 171f. Field refers to roaring boys also in *A Woman Is a Weathercock* [*Dodsley*[4], XI, 58] and, as "Swaggerers," in *Amends for Ladies* [*ibid.,* pp. 98, 125f.].

[93]*Middleton,* ed. Bullen, 4.1. J. P. Collier erroneously says the school is conducted by Chough and Trimtram [*Dodsley*[4], XI, 139].

[94]4.1.27.

[95]4.1.35f.

[96]4.1.53f.

[97]2.2.212ff.

[98]2.2.224f.

[99]4.1.65.

[100]4.1.75ff.

[101]Title-page.

[102]Pollard and Redgrave call this another edition [*Short-Title Catalogue,* p. 237], but incorrectly [see R. B. McKerrow, *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (Oxford, 1927), pp. 175f.]

[103]See my article on the 1618 quarto of *Amends* in an early issue of *The Library.*

[104]This issue is represented by the unique copy in the Henry E. Huntington Library, available to me on microfilm. A comparison of title-pages reveals that only a small part of the page was reset. Within rules, the subtitle, which has been placed between lines 2 and 3, occupies but little more space in the unique copy than the ornamental headpiece which fills the corresponding space in the first issue. The only other difference is the presence in the unique copy of a rule between lines 3 and 4. The remainder of the page, lines 4-14, is identical in the two versions and was printed from the same setting of type, as slight breaks in certain letters and exact correspondence of spacing prove.

[105]*Dodsley*[4], XI, 58.

[106]*Op. cit.,* p. 186.

[107]*Op. cit.,* p. 243.

[108]1611 *Greenes Tu Quoque;* 1612 *Woman Is a Weathercock, The Alchemist;* 1613 *Abuses Stript and Whipt;* 1614 *Bartholomew Fair;* 1615 Webster, "A Roaring Boy"; 1617 *A Fair Quarrel;* 1618 *Amends for Ladies;* 1620 *Philaster* [acted earlier], "I Know What I know," *A Pair of Spy Knaves, The Astrologaster.*

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PUBLICATION KEY

A —Anglia
ACS —Andiron Club Summons
B —Books
D —The Dial
JEGP —Journal of English and Germanic Philology
JSP —Journal of Sexology and Psychoanalysis
MLN —Modern Language Notes
MLR —Modern Language Review
PE —Psyche and Eros
PMLA—Publications of the Modern Language Association
PQ —Philological Quarterly
SAB —Shakespeare Association Bulletin
ShR —Shakespeare Review
SJ —Shakespeare Jahrbuch
SP —Studies in Philology
SRL —Saturday Review of Literature
TLS —Times Literary Supplement

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